

January 6, 1975

To the Steering Committee of the Leninist Trotskyist Faction

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed with this letter are the minutes of the December 17 meeting of the United Secretariat (prepared by Johnson) and a letter from Jack to Ernest and Charles summarizing the informal discussions that took place at the same time. Together they cover the essential points concerning the last United Secretariat meeting and the preparations for the IEC meeting at the end of January.

A proposal for meeting the travel costs of the IEC members was adopted by the United Secretariat with three abstentions. The earlier proposal made by Comrades Aubin and Smith (see December 6 letter from Mary-Alice to Ernest, contained in December 10 mailing) was dropped and the adopted arrangement moves in the direction of establishing a travel pool to equalize costs.

Also enclosed with this mailing are several items related to the United Secretariat discussions with the OCI leadership:

- An exchange of letters between Ernest and Joe.
- A letter from Joe to Pierre Lambert
- A public statement adopted by the Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers Party and released on January 2. As the cover letter from Jack to Charles points out, this statement was made at the urging of the comrades of the IMT.
- A letter from Mary-Alice to Ernest concerning the exchange of bulletins with the OCI.

Finally, enclosed are a number of additional letters of importance:

- A letter to the International Control Commission from the Political Bureau of the SWP concerning the conduct of one of the members of the Control Commission.
- An exchange of letters between Ernest Mandel and Joseph Hansen concerning materials from Portugal published in Intercontinental Press.
- An exchange of correspondence between the Canadian section of the Fourth International and the Canadian sympathizing organization concerning the recent tour made by Comrade Hugo Blanco in Canada.
- A letter from Gus Horowitz to Comrade Jaber in Lebanon concerning recent developments in the Arab East.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice

UNITED SECRETARIAT MEETING, December 17, 1974

PRESENT: Aubin, Claudio, Domingo, Duret, Fourier, Georges, Jens, Johnson, Mintoff, Roman, Rudi, Pepe, Walter, Williams

IEC PRESENT: Brewster, Celso, Smith, Thérèse, Valdez

GUEST: Roger

Agenda: 1. Chile
2. Spain
3. Ireland
4. IEC Finances
5. Preparations of the IEC
6. OCI Discussions
7. Chile Solidarity
8. Miscellaneous

Chair: Smith

Meeting Convened: 10:20 a.m.

1. Chile

Report by Valdez on conditions in Chile and conditions of the political prisoners.

Agreed that the bureau should organize a discussion at a later United Secretariat meeting to deal with the points raised by Valdez concerning the defense of political prisoners.

2. Spain

Report by Walter on recent developments there.

3. Ireland

Report by Roger on discussions with Peoples Democracy and the possibilities of a fusion between the RMG and PD.

Recess for lunch: 12:55 p.m.

Reconvene: 4:00 p.m.

Ireland continued.

Discussion: Mintoff, Roger, Thérèse, Celso, Walter, Roger, Aubin, Pepe, Smith, Pepe, Roger, Smith, Pepe, Brewster, Smith, Williams, Aubin, Pepe

Agreed for the bureau to organize a cadre school for the Irish comrades and Peoples Democracy and to have discussions with PD about the Fourth International.

4. IEC Finances

Report by Thérèse.

Discussion: Celso, Duret, Celso, Thérèse, Celso, Duret, Thérèse,

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Fourier, Duret, Smith, Celso, Smith, Roman, Jens, Aubin, Celso, Walter, Jens, Smith, Celso, Fourier.

Motion: To accept the proposed quotas with the understanding that we will need to review the total cost and will probably have to propose additional quotas for European sections and that the financial subcommittee will have to continue to meet to discuss this problem.

Carried. 8 for, 0 against, 3 abstentions (Johnson, Williams, Pepe)

5. Preparations of the IEC

Report by Celso on initial informal discussions to prepare the IEC.

6. OCI Discussions

Report by Pierre on his proposed statement breaking off discussions without further contact.

Discussion: Pepe, Roman, Aubin, Fourier, Walter, Georges, Pepe, Fourier, Roman, Pepe, Celso, Aubin, Fourier

Motion to adopt the general approach outlined by Aubin: that we have another meeting with the OCI to raise several additional questions.

1. The OCI internal circular contained several errors on how the first meeting was set up. We should request that they correct these errors.

2. An issue of Informations Ouvrières that appeared after the first meeting contained a slanderous attack on leaders of the Fourth International. We should request that they cease publishing slanderous characterizations and correct any false statements made since our first meeting with them. Specifically they should make clear that they consider us as part of the workers movement.

3. We should consider their agreement with these requests as conditions for further discussion with them. If rejected we draft a letter to them ending the current discussions.

Motion carried 11 for, 0 against, 0 abstention

7. Chile Solidarity

Valdez reported on proposals for Chile solidarity work.

Discussion: Walter, Valdez

Agreed to circulate the information to the United Secretariat members and to refer the question to the next United Secretariat meeting.

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8. Miscellaneous

A. Walter reported on completion of the fusion in Holland.

B. Walter reported on a letter from the Permanent Revolution group in Naples informing the United Secretariat of their request to join the Italian section. Livio will meet with them soon.

Meeting adjourned: 7:30 p.m.

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New York
January 2, 1975

Dear Ernest and Charles,

Joe and I thought it would be useful to send you a summary of the informal discussions with you and Sebastien that Celso reported on to the last United Secretariat. As you remember, no formal action was taken.

IEC Agenda and Schedule

1. World Economic Situation. We agreed there is every reason to strive for a single, short resolution that can be published following the IEC. Ernest would give the report for the United Secretariat. We assume this point would take one-half day. This would deal solely with the world economic crisis, not with political perspectives in dispute; these would be deferred to the written discussion in the International Internal Discussion Bulletin that will be opened by the IEC.

Since Karl was unable to be present at this United Secretariat we have no way of knowing what reporting time requests he would ask on this point, or those listed below.

2. Argentina. We assume this would take one day and there would be equal time reports from the IMT and ITP.

3. Organizational Norms of the Fourth International and Unity of the Fourth International. We agreed to schedule one day for this. As had been agreed at the United Secretariat on September 7-8, we would open the discussion with our report. We will give you a full outline well before the IEC so that you have adequate time to prepare your report.

4. The fourth and last day of the IEC would hear the report from the Control Commission. It would elect a new United Secretariat. It would open the International Internal Discussion Bulletin as decided at the last world congress and hear a hopefully unanimous report agreeing to hold off any decision on the timing of the next world congress or oral discussion in the sections. In addition, we may need brief attention to the campaigns in defense of political prisoners, especially in Peru, Argentina, and Chile.

United Secretariat

We agreed there would be no restriction on nominating consultative or alternate members of the IEC to the United Secretariat, and that the character of their vote on the United Secretariat would be the same as the character of their vote on the IEC. That is, consultative members and alternate members who were not seated as regular members at the previous IEC would have consultative vote.

It was agreed that the ITP would add four or five members to the United Secretariat, including one or two members of the Political Committee level leadership of the SWP, and that at

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least one of these will be resident.

It was agreed the United Secretariat would elect a Bureau which will include three or four LTF members, and it was confidently expected this Bureau will settle, to the satisfaction of all sides, the outstanding practical problems.

The Internationalist Tendency

On your request we exchanged views on the IT and found we still have fundamental differences of evaluation.

We did agree on two points.

One, that the moral authority of the factual findings and recommendations of the International Control Commission would be recognized by all sectors of the world movement if its members comport themselves objectively and their investigation is thorough.

Secondly, we concurred that the IEC has no statutory authority to take organizational action in relation to the report of the International Control Commission. Of course, it is understood that one or more of the international factions or tendencies may want to make a statement on their opinions and attitude toward these matters.

Comradely,

s/Jack

(original sent on SWP letterhead)

January 2, 1974

United Secretariat

Dear Comrades,

I am enclosing a public statement issued by the Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers Party that is self-explanatory.

Copies have been sent to Intercontinental Press, Inprecor, Rouge, and Informations Ouvrières.

Comradely yours,

Jack Barnes
National Secretary

cc: Intercontinental Press
Inprecor
Rouge
Informations Ouvrières

COPY

New York
January 3, 1975

Dear Ernest,

Under separate cover we've sent double copies of several additional documents that the O.C.I. gave me when I was last in Paris. As Joe mentioned to you, I went by their headquarters to deliver the documents decided on by the United Secretariat.

Our xerox machine has been broken for a week, or these would have been sent off sooner. The second set of copies is for the ICR leadership.

Of particular interest are 1) the two items related to the recent split in the Healy organization; 2) the translation of a document from the FOR-Lora; and 3) a rough draft of the political resolution being discussed at the O.C.I. European conference this weekend.

François D. indicated that they would be sending us an additional package of stuff. Since I didn't give them much advance notice that I was going to drop by with the material from the United Secretariat they did not have time to prepare a larger package for us.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice

On the OCI's Proposal to Discuss Differences

[The following statement was released by the Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers Party on January 2, 1975.]

On October 15, 1974, a meeting was held between representatives of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and representatives of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste. Observers of the Socialist Workers Party were present. The purpose of the meeting was to hear proposals made by the OCI to engage in a discussion of their differences with the United Secretariat.

The initiative in this move was taken by the leaders of the OCI. In May 1973 they wrote to the United Secretariat proposing that they be permitted to participate in the discussion then going on in the Fourth International. Because of the hostile way in which it was presented, the proposal appeared to be merely a factional maneuver and it was rejected.

The OCI leaders repeated their advance in a much more comradely way in October 1973. The United Secretariat decided to respond in kind, informing the OCI that while their proposal could not be accepted at the moment it could be reconsidered at a later time. Unfortunately, in the pressure of preparations for a world congress, the letter was not sent.

In September 1974 the OCI again took the initiative. This time, however, the OCI leaders did not go first to the United Secretariat but to the Socialist Workers Party. One of their representatives engaged in literary work in the United States became involved in private discussions with various members of the SWP. They pressed him on some of the issues that have kept the OCI separated from the Trotskyist movement as a whole.

Later the OCI representative asked for a meeting with the leadership of the SWP. This was granted, and two leaders of the SWP met with him. He said that the OCI was still interested in opening a discussion with the United Secretariat, but if this proved to be impossible, the OCI would like to invite the SWP to hold such a discussion.

The SWP representatives said that it would be incorrect for the SWP to act unilaterally in such a matter. They did agree, however, to pass the OCI's request on to the United Secretariat.

The United Secretariat, after considering the question, decided to hear the proposals of the OCI and to explore the possibility of ameliorating relations. A first step in this direction could be the exchange of internal bulletins.

Practical arrangements were made and the meeting was held. The OCI representatives outlined their proposals and explained their motivation. Some preliminary statements were made concerning the differences. A possible framework for probing the differences and trying to ameliorate relations was discussed. No agreement was reached beyond such minimal steps as exchanging internal bulletins. The participants then reported back.

A copy of the internal report made by the OCI representatives to the top leadership of their organization happened to fall into the

hands of one of the ultraleft sects in the United States, which immediately published it along with a provocative attack accusing the OCI of "capitulation" to the United Secretariat.

Some of the things said in the internal report were interpreted by others as indicating bad faith on the part of the OCI leaders in their approach to the United Secretariat.

Certain formulations in the internal report lend themselves to misinterpretation, it appears to us. They could be taken as indicating a hope of making immediate gains by maneuvering in the internal discussion that has been going on in the Fourth International for the past five years. However, one is led to an opposite conclusion if the internal report is considered as a whole and viewed in the more general context of the development of all the organizations claiming adherence to Trotskyism.

From this angle, the internal report tends to confirm the sincerity of the OCI leaders. As we see it, they are neither capitulating nor trying to carry out a raid. The OCI leaders, we think, have reached the conclusion that the Fourth International is discussing questions of prime importance to the revolutionary-socialist movement. In a debate of that depth they feel that their views as serious revolutionists ought to be taken into consideration.

While they hold firm positions, which they intend to defend vigorously, they are prepared to modify them in the face of compelling arguments and draw the requisite practical conclusions. They expect that the organizations adhering to the United Secretariat, or in sympathy with its general aims, will display similar good faith.

The willingness of the OCI leaders to engage in the give and take of a free discussion is a favorable development, in our opinion. It promises to open the way to a fruitful dialogue.

Nevertheless, an obstacle still stands in the way. Some of the public characterizations used by the OCI in the past with regard to members of the United Secretariat, particularly leaders of the Front Communiste Révolutionnaire in France, were excessive, in our view. If they were to be echoed now, it would be hard to avoid concluding that the OCI is engaging in a short-term maneuver rather than moving toward a basic discussion with an open mind.

An example is to be found in Informations Ouvrières No. 679 (November 14-20, 1974). One of the leaders of the United Secretariat is called a "sycophant" and is accused of having written "perfidiously" eighteen years ago with regard to the proletarian uprising in Hungary. (The record of the comrade in question is absolutely clear on the decisive question--complete support of the incipient political revolution and opposition to Moscow's repressive intervention.)

We think that such characterizations are out of order. We consider them to be hangovers from past factional positions that demand reexamination if a serious discussion is to be undertaken. Particularly important is the question of accuracy and objectivity in considering the positions held by different individuals and tendencies at the time.

The issues in those factional battles and who turned out to be correct historically can be debated without the use of epithets. To let disparaging labels stand in the way of a comradely discussion of current differences (however much the current differences may be related in the final analysis to past positions) would be a political mistake, in our opinion.

It would be excellent if the OCI would again take the initiative and clarify this question in an unmistakable way.

We hope that the OCI will do its part to eliminate such obstacles and thereby help clear the way for a comradely discussion of current and past differences. Without such a discussion, it is hardly possible in this instance to reach a point where a principled basis can be found for closer fraternal relations and the kind of comradely collaboration that would give the Fourth International a new impulse forward.

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December 9, 1974

Dear Joe,

Thank you for your letter of November 29 and the Workers Vanguard issue enclosed. I hadn't seen the Workers Vanguard, but I had indeed seen the Lambert circular letter, which the French "section" of the Spartacists had distributed widely at an FCR meeting in Paris.

I find your comments more interesting than the Robertson article itself, which is just the latest variation of the theme that they are the "only consistent" opponents of "pabloism". Incidentally, do you know that there exists a "Fifth International", which is supposed to call itself "the single greatest threat to the Spartacists"?

The Lambert circular letter includes at least one blatant falsification: the statement that this meeting was called by the SWP (on the request of the SWP) and not on the request of the Lambertists themselves. This is a minor matter, but it does not appear promising as to assessing their good faith. In addition it contains the allegation that prior to the meeting, and independently of the Broue meeting in New York, there was a meeting between the SWP and the Lambertists. I wondered why you didn't comment on this allegation in your letter. Perhaps you'll return to it during our next meeting.

Please try and come here the 15th already, because, as I wrote Jack, I'll be busy on the 16th evening, so we should meet the 16th in the afternoon, and you should be over your jet-lag then.

Fraternally yours,

Ernest

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December 22, 1974

Dear Ernest,

Your letter of December 9 was not delivered until December 16, which, of course, was after we had left for Brussels. So I did not see it until I returned to New York.

No. I didn't know about the formation of a "Fifth International" dedicated to becoming "the single greatest threat to the Spartacists." The Fifth International seems to merit being placed on the list I keep of ultraleft sects to be followed for enlightenment, instruction, and entertainment. How do I go about getting on their mailing list?

On the Lambert internal letter, I don't think the formulation you mention is actually a "blatant falsification." After all, since it was not intended for publication, the document is written loosely for an "in group" that automatically fits seemingly obscure references into the frame of previous internal communications and decisions. The formulation in question is that the meeting "was held at the request of the SWP leadership." But all of the OCI leaders to whom the letter was sent know that the OCI took the initiative as early as May 1973 in accordance with a decision they must have participated in making (whether they were for or against). And all of them know that the initiative was renewed in October 1973.

In those two instances, the OCI addressed the United Secretariat directly. After not getting a reply to the initiative of October 1973, the OCI tried again about a year later, this time turning to the SWP. The SWP referred the matter to the United Secretariat (which is what we told Broue we would do). It appears to me that this is what the author of the document was talking about when he said "at the request" of the SWP leadership -- that, and the fact that the SWP leadership favored exploring the advance made by the OCI.

The stress is on the role of the SWP, naturally; but I don't see any problem in clarifying the point in view of the clear emphasis placed in the document on the policy of the OCI, which was adopted some time ago: "We were the only ones to speak in the name of an international mandate: we were intervening in the framework of the mandate established by the decisions of the International Bureau in favor of international discussion. Facing us were delegations from different organizations without any common mandate except to listen to us." Note especially: "we were intervening."

As to your question about a "preliminary meeting," this no doubt refers to our informing them of the decision reached by the United Secretariat and our outlining the conditions of the meeting. You will recall that after the United Secretariat decided to meet with representatives of the OCI to hear their proposals, we agreed to get in touch with them to make the practical arrangements. We carried out the assignment, paying special attention to making clear to them what the conditions were. It turned out that they were ready to accept whatever framework the United Secretariat

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proposed. We then got in touch with the FCR to set the time and place.

That the OCI leaders got the point on how the United Secretariat wanted to proceed is shown by the following paragraph in their internal report: "By its very existence the meeting is a verification of the correct character of the tactical steps taken by the International Bureau to intervene in the crisis of the USec. More basically, it is a confirmation of the correctness of the 'open conference' method." The second sentence is the significant one -- open conference method; that is, meetings with all present, aboveboard procedures, no secret behind-the-scenes deals or understandings. I would disagree with the first sentence, in which they take credit for insisting on this way of conducting talks and probing the possibilities; but I would not make it a fighting issue as long as they accept the "open conference method" and adhere to it. (Notice also in that first sentence the clear reference to who took the initiative -- "tactical steps taken by the International Bureau to intervene...")

It is worth noting that in this highly confidential internal report the outline of what occurred at the meeting (leaving aside the self-congratulations, etc.) is substantially the same as the outline reported by the comrades on our side. To me this indicates that the OCI leaders were trying to be accurate as to the facts in their confidential report while interpreting them from their special point of view and with their internal problems in mind (which, of course, colors the facts in a way that might not have occurred had the report been written with the idea of its being published).

While I am on the point, I should remind you that besides Broue, whom you mention, we also talked with Francois Demassot. I forget the exact date -- was it a year and a half ago? -- but I reported that to the United Secretariat at the time. As you will recall, he sought to sound me out on the possibility of the OCI participating in the discussion then going on in the Fourth International and I told him that in my opinion it was excluded.

Also, you will recall, we reported that when Broue was in New York, some of the comrades around the office got into debates with him on the positions held by the OCI, particularly the OCI's calling for a vote for the candidates of the Union of the Left. Since he was here for several weeks, this occurred more than once.

So much for that.

Upon returning from Brussels, we included in our report the points you and Charles made concerning the appropriateness of the SWP making a public statement with regard to the OCI's internal document. The comrades agreed that it might be a good idea but they wanted first to pay the OCI the courtesy of asking them about the accuracy of the document. So I drew up a letter on this. A copy is enclosed. A copy for the FCR is being sent directly to them.

Fraternally yours,

Joe

SWP letterhead

December 22, 1974

Pierre Lambert
Informations Ouvrieres
87, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis
74010 Paris, France

Dear Comrade Lambert,

It occurred to me that because of the postal strike in France or some other reason you may not have seen the November 22 issue of the Workers Vanguard, the paper of the Spartacist League; so I am enclosing a copy. It contains an English translation of a confidential internal report, presumably sent by your Political Bureau, informing members of your Central Committee of the details of the meeting in which members of the United Secretariat and observers of the Socialist Workers Party heard the proposal of representatives of the Organisation Communiste Internationaliste to open a discussion and your explanation of the motivations of the OCI in taking the initiative in this.

In addition, the Spartacist League distributed a mimeographed French version of the OCI internal report at public meetings of the Front Communiste Revolutionnaire in Paris. We assume that they also distributed it at public meetings of the OCI, although we have received no confirmation of this. If by chance you have not seen a copy, we can send a Xerox of one that was forwarded to us.

In view of the publicity given to your confidential internal report -- which occurred, of course, through no bad faith on your part -- the Political Bureau of the Socialist Workers Party is considering making a public comment on the incident. We would therefore appreciate learning from you whether the version of the internal report circulated by the Spartacist League is accurate. For instance, is it complete?

As you will gather from the way the Workers Vanguard attacks the OCI and the other participants in the meeting, the Spartacist League is vexed at the initiative you took and alarmed over the possibility that the willingness of the United Secretariat to consider your proposal might lead to some kind of rapprochement. The leaders of the Spartacist League would like to block any amelioration of relations. As we know from experience with this sectarian grouping, they would not hesitate to resort to a provocation to accomplish such an objective.

We would appreciate hearing from you by return mail.

Comradely yours,

Joseph Hansen

cc: United Secretariat
Front Communiste Revolutionnaire

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New York
January 2, 1975

Dear Charles,

Enclosed is the public statement that several of you at the last United Secretariat meeting urged us to make.

Comrades here (including myself) still were not totally convinced a public move was the best next step. But our report on the insistence of your request at the last United Secretariat meeting swayed them.

Joe tells me I.P. will publish the OCI internal circular signed Francois as a document along with our statement. Francois confirmed its authenticity when Mary-Alice exchanged the internal bulletins with him.

When you run our statement in Rouge, please use larger size type than you used for Sandor's note on the OCI internal letter -- we almost went blind trying to read it.

Comradely,

Jack

cc: Ernest
Daniel

COPY

New York
January 2, 1975

To the Members of the International Control Commission (Bundy, Eduard, Gormley, Hoffman, Lars, Tantalus)

Dear Comrades,

We would like to call your attention to the conduct of one of the members of the International Control Commission, Comrade Hoffmann, during the recent convention of the Front Communiste Revolutionnaire in France.

The convention was held December 19-22, while a delegated subcommittee of four other members of the ICC were in New York, beginning the investigation of the circumstances surrounding the split of the Internationalist Tendency from the Socialist Workers Party.

Comrade Hoffmann was the reporter for Tendency 3 on the organization report at the FCR convention. In his summary remarks, he informed the convention that the internal situation in the SWP was still under investigation by the International Control Commission so he could not give the delegates a conclusive report on its findings. However, he continued, he wanted to make a few remarks.

He proceeded to tell the convention that all members of the ICC, including those nominated to the ICC by the international minority, were in agreement that it was false to say the Internationalist Tendency had split from the Socialist Workers Party. On the contrary, Hoffmann asserted, the Control Commission of the SWP had been brutally assembled to force out the IT. He implied that something irregular had been done when the SWP National Committee named one of its members to the Control Commission (although this is required according to the statutes of the SWP).

Comrade Hoffmann went on to comment that the ICC had established at its first meeting that the SWP leadership based its decisions on the material published in the special internal bulletin called "Materials Related to the Split of the Internationalist Tendency from the Socialist Workers Party" [Internal Information Bulletin No. 6 in 1974]. He offered his opinion that the published material was in no way sufficient to justify the conclusions reached by the SWP Control Commission or Political Committee. In fact, he said, the bulletin proves exactly the opposite, since it contains the text of a letter written by a leader of the IT warning about the split course of the international minority.

Comrade Hoffmann concluded by telling those delegates who had expressed concern about the deepening divisions in the international to address themselves not to the international majority, but to the minority, whom he held responsible for splitting actions such as those taken against the Internationalist Tendency.

The following day Comrade Hoffmann introduced into the record of the convention a statement that while his references to the proceedings of the International Control Commission may have been inappropriate, he wanted to insist on the opinions he

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expressed concerning the substance of the matter.

The conduct of Comrade Hoffmann during the FCR convention clearly demonstrated that far from being willing to suspend judgment pending investigation of the facts so that the Control Commission could determine the truth and place it before the IEC, he had already made up his mind before the investigation even began.

His comments to the FCR convention concerning an investigation currently underway, in which he had only marginally participated, compromise that entire body of which he is an elected member.

In addition, his remarks were clearly designed to prejudice the opinions of a significant section of members of the Fourth International even before the Control Commission makes its report and before these members are able to read any of the abundant documentation concerning this question.

The only way to prevent Comrade Hoffman's actions from totally compromising the moral authority of any report eventually made by the International Control Commission is for him to immediately disqualify himself from further participation in this particular investigation.

Comradely,

Mary-Alice Waters
for the SWP Political Committee

cc: United Secretariat
Central Committee of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire

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December 1, 1974

Mr. Joseph Hansen, Editor Intercontinental Press.

Dear Joe,

I noticed in the November 4, 1974 issue of Intercontinental Press the reproduction of a statement by the Portuguese Grupo Marxista Revolucionaria on "Sunday Labor in Portugal". This is reproduced in Spanish in the Intercontinental Press issue of November 25, 1974.

In Intercontinental Press of November 11, 1974 there appears an interview with representatives of three high-school student papers in Lisbon, containing explicit criticism of the L.C.I., the sympathizing organization of the F.I. in Portugal.

I believe this procedure is irregular and involves a departure from previous custom, for which neither the associate editors nor any body of the world trotskyst movement has been consulted.

While it is normal that Intercontinental Press publishes documents, for documentary reasons, from various organizations, it is not customary to do this with regard to groupings outside of the Fourth International, competing with sections or sympathizing sections in those countries where such organizations exist, or where there exist organizations which are part of the world trotskyst movement and which are only prevented to be affiliated with the F.I. as the result of reactionary legislation. At least it is not normal to do so without prior consultation with said section or sympathizing organization.

I do not remember that Intercontinental Press has ever published "for documentary reasons", statements of the SLL or the WRP in Britain, without prior consultation with the IMG, or statements of the Spartacist League or the Workers League without prior consultation with the S.W.P.

This procedure is all the more irregular where explicit criticisms of the section's or sympathizing organization's policy is involved in statements by outside groups.

At the 10th world congress, only one sympathizing organization of the F.I., the Liga Comunista Internacionalista, was recognized in Portugal. Neither the G.M.R. nor the high school students publishing the three papers mentioned in Intercontinental Press of November 11, 1974, have ever written to the United Secretariat or to any other leading body of the F.I. requesting relations with the Fourth International. As we are not aware that the publication of these two items has occurred in agreement with the comrades of the L.C.I. I believe it was a mistake and should not be repeated.

Fraternally yours,

s/Ernest
(associate editor of Intercontinental Press)

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December 10, 1974

Dear Ernest,

Thanks for your letter of December 1 in which you question our having published two items: (1) a document indicating the stand taken by the GMR on the Sunday labor demanded by the Portuguese government; and (2) an interview with representatives of three high-school student papers in Lisbon, in which one of the high-school students makes an "explicit criticism of the L.C.I."

You say, "I believe this procedure is irregular and involves a departure from previous custom, for which neither the associate editors nor any body of the world trotskyst movement has been consulted."

You argue that the publication of these two items was as irregular as if we had published "statements of the SLL or the WRP in Britain, without prior consultation with the IMG, or statements of the Spartacist League or the Workers League without prior consultation with the S.W.P."

You add: "This procedure is all the more irregular where explicit criticisms of the section's or sympathizing organization's policy is involved in statements by outside groups."

I went back and read the two items again to try to figure out how you could have come to such conclusions.

First, on the interview, "How Portuguese High-School Students Joined in Struggle Against Dictatorship." In my opinion, this is a very informative interview that helps give one a feeling of the mood and thinking of the radicalizing high-school students in Lisbon. That the three students were active in the underground before the downfall of Caetano makes the interview all the more valuable and interesting. When it came across my desk, I considered it a kind of "scoop" which publications of the sections and sympathizing organizations would appreciate and perhaps want to translate and publish. On rereading it, I felt all the more strongly that this editorial judgment was an accurate one.

Your contention that the interview contained an "explicit criticism of the L.C.I." is based on two sentences, which read as follows: "There were also positions like the Maoist slogan 'Neither Caetano nor Spínola, people's revolution!' or the one offered by the Liga Comunista Internacionalista: 'Neither Caetano nor Spínola, socialist revolution!' But these slogans made no impact and were later withdrawn."

The mild statement of opinion in the second sentence (or was it, more accurately, a statement of fact?) was not sufficient basis, in my opinion, for rejecting the interview. And I would be opposed to deleting such an expression of opinion since it would have meant distorting what was said and thereby giving a not altogether accurate picture of this high-school student's views and level of political development.

So far as genuine criticisms in the interview were concerned, most of them were self-criticisms, many of them quite sharp. These were very interesting because the accompanying explanations were honest and, I thought, valid -- that some of their past positions were taken either because of extreme youth or because of ignorance owing to the fascist-like conditions then prevailing. Moreover, it was abundantly clear from what the students said in the interview that they were revolutionists and were moving in the direction of Trotskyism.

Now as to the GMR document (which does not contain any criticism of the LCI, explicit or otherwise). I disagree completely with the contention that our publishing it amounted to the same as publishing a document of the SLL, Spartacist, etc., without consultation.

First of all, I think that each case must be considered on its merits and in relation to concrete situations. In the case of the SLL or Spartacist, etc., we are dealing with old, hardened sects that originated in splits from our movement and that headed away from Trotskyism. It cannot be excluded, of course, that they will never change, that they will never move toward us. But that is not the situation at the moment.

In Portugal the situation is utterly different. Here we are confronted with the sudden downfall of an extremely reactionary regime, a sudden popular outburst, and what may well prove to be the beginning of a socialist revolution. In this situation all kinds of groupings can form and move in our direction. The information contained in the interview with the three high-school student leaders is an indication of that.

This demands of us the utmost flexibility and receptivity. We have powerful competitors there. We also have some who are not so powerful, such as the SLL, Spartacist, etc., but who can be very diplomatic in appealing to young rebels, particularly if we have inadvertently given them a bad impression on first contact.

It would be a grave mistake, in my opinion, to think that the decision of the last world congress settled everything so far as the establishment of a viable section in Portugal is concerned. For one thing, the explosion in Portugal with all its ensuing ferment and impulsion for the formation of new currents and groups occurred after the congress. The comrades who were recognized by the congress as a sympathizing organization may well prove to have unusual capacities in attracting and assembling the new forces that were set in motion following the congress, but we must also add that this remains to be tested. And we should keep in mind the many experiences of the past, some of which were not so good in this respect.

In relation to the GMR, the LCI may already have passed the test. When Gerry returned from his last trip to Portugal he reported that the two groups were engaged in unity negotiations. I assume that these are still proceeding; at least we have received no word to the contrary. On this basis alone, I cannot see how anyone would want to object to our publishing as a document an item on an event of current interest that indicated the

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attitude of the young revolutionists in the GMR who have shown their interest in being added to the ranks of the Fourth International.

Fraternally yours,

s/Joe
Editor

COPY

October 31, 1974.

To Political Committee of League for Socialist Action

Comrades,

The Revolutionary Marxist Group endorses the tour of Hugo Blanco and each of our branches will sponsor the tour in each area on the condition that (1) the tour is broadly sponsored and (2) that floor discussion is provided as part of the schedule of all public meetings.

Given we have been given no assurance in our discussions that Comrade Blanco will abide by decisions taken and line adopted by the Tenth World Congress specifically dealing with Latin America and, in fact, Comrade Newbigging of your Political Committee indicates quite the contrary, we do not choose to participate in the Hugo Blanco Tour Committee and viewed the discussion we have engaged in to have been little more than a factional maneuver by the Canadian section's followers of the LTF.

We do not wish to participate in the committee furthermore because of the demands you have made on the form of the tour and the role of the committee. We reject a unity maneuver which takes the form of a completely administrative function for our cooperation. All decisions regarding the tour have been taken by you and, just in case you have forgotten something, you say any conflict will be resolved by comrade Blanco. Given you will have almost exclusive contact with the comrade, this implies to us that all conflicts will be resolved by a decision of the Canadian LTF.

Your hard and fast decision that the tour must include, besides Blanco, an ISA tour organizer and an SWP translator, seals the nature of the tour. You wish to hold, at considerable expense, an LTF factional tour on your political line on international questions.

Your commitment to have any surplus funds from the tour go to an unstated international project, after you have paid off the debts for three tour participants, is also quite questionable. You propose nothing concrete such as funds to building the Trotskyist press in Greece or Portugal, extending the breadth of the Spanish language INPRECOR or even to funds to build the Peruvian organizations of the Fourth International. Instead, you leave it to Hugo to decide the questions of distribution of funds when he arrives. How could you seriously expect us to accept such terms for united work?

We hold quite unfortunate that you chose to lay ultimatums on conditions before us via comrade Newbigging. We seriously believed you were making honest unity proposals when we were approached by comrade Addison. When we were handed an unacceptable completed concept of the tour, you also raised the question of forming a Canadian coordinating Committee of Fourth International organizations. Unfortunately, you have chosen to use the weighty question of the unity of the international as a factional maneuver having no content or even a facade of credibility. To

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use Hugo Blanco as such a factional football so you can write new scandalous letters of misrepresentation, this comrades is a serious disservice to that unity that you so rhetorically defend. The problems between our two organizations in Canada are not ones that can solely be resolved in the national context and until such time as you show a sign of cooperation that indicates your capacity and desire to give as well as take, real united work between us remains an abstract discussion.

Political Committee

Revolutionary Marxist Group

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ISA/ISO Central Office
334 Queen Street West
Toronto, Ontario
November 24, 1974

Political Committee
Revolutionary Marxist Group

Dear Comrades:

In regard to your letter of October 31, 1974, we feel it is a serious error that you have chosen not to join us in common organization of the tour for Hugo Blanco this month. We note your agreement to sponsor the tour, with other organizations, in each area where you have a branch, and will contact your branches in the near future. As you are aware, we have planned for broad sponsorship of the tour, and for discussion periods in the public meetings.

Of course it is good that you will sponsor the local meetings. However, it should be noted that by limiting its participation in the tour to sponsorship of local meetings, the RMG will be doing little more than the many university departments, liberal and left-minded prominent individuals, and different non-Trotskyist organizations who will be sponsoring such meetings. Our aim was more ambitious -- to have the RMG participate in the planning of the entire tour.

We presented the proposal for joint organization of the Blanco tour not as a factional maneuver, but as a project that might aid collaboration between the two organizations of the Fourth International in Canada. We hoped that this might provide a model for future work in Canada, as well as for projects in other countries where two FI organizations exist. We did not think that this tour would eliminate the differences between us on Latin American or Canadian questions, but we did hope that it might help ease tensions, eliminate misunderstandings and clarify what our differences are.

You present your fundamental reason for refusing active participation as follows: "We have been given no assurances in our discussions that comrade Blanco will abide by (the) decisions taken and (the) line adopted by the Tenth World Congress" on Latin America. May we remind you that comrade Blanco is a leader of the Fourth International and a member of the United Secretariat? Yet you put his loyalty in question by suggesting that that he will not act as a responsible member of the world movement. This is truly outrageous, and in violation of the traditions of the Fourth International.

As comrade Blanco's views on Latin America are well known, we can understand that the RMG anticipates that it will disagree with parts of his speech. But this should not be an insurmountable problem. For one thing, the RMG's views on the topic are rather well known in Canada. They will be further expressed through the interventions of RMG leaders during the meetings, and in the sale of RMG literature.

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We do not think your sponsorship of the Blanco tour should depend on agreement with the contents of his speech. We proposed to co-sponsor the Canadian tour of Alain Krivine without placing any conditions on the content of his talks. We anticipated we would disagree with sections of it, but considered that to be a distinctly subordinate factor. We wished to co-sponsor the tour because it offered the possibility of building the Fourth International, and because we thought it important that Canadian Trotskyists present a united face to the public. (Nor did we demand in advance any "assurances" that comrade Krivine would not violate discipline.)

The effect of the refusal of the RMG and comrade Krivine to accept our co-sponsorship, was to strike a serious blow at the unity of the International. It exacerbated the existing divisions among Fourth Internationalists in Canada. It presented an image of the International to the Canadian radical public as an organization divided into two warring groupings, lurching toward a split. The way the Krivine tour was organized violated the agreements to strengthen the unity of the world movement adopted by the delegates at the Tenth World Congress.

A recent positive example of a tour by an international leader which helped build the Fourth International in a united manner was comrade Mandel's highly successful tour of Australia. That tour was organized by the two Australian sympathizing organizations through a joint committee. This helped maximize the tour's success. We think the Mandel tour shows the way that tours by international leaders should be organized in Canada in the future, and that was the essence of our proposal for the Blanco tour. Your rejection of our proposal suggests that you choose the model of factional tours, exacerbating divisions.

You give some supplementary reasons for your refusal. "All decisions regarding the tour have been taken by you and, just in case you have forgotten something, you say any conflict will be resolved by comrade Blanco."

Surely you do not object to comrade Blanco's having the last word on arrangements for a tour whose aim is to allow him to present his views. All the more so as he wants to ensure that the tour in no way jeopardizes his somewhat precarious legal status as an exile.

You raise two specific objections to our projections for the tour, regarding our proposals on a tour organizer and a translator, and regarding tour finances. We do not see why you do this. Your letter states that you could not co-organize the tour in any case because of the problem of what Blanco might say in his speeches. If you were seriously concerned about these two problems, you would have discussed them with us in a joint meeting, as we requested, so that we might reach a mutually agreeable solution.

At the conclusion of the meeting between Walter Davis of the RMG and Joan Newbigging of the League, we set up a joint meeting for November 2nd. But, rather than coming to that meeting and discussing your objections to the tour with us, you uni-

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laterally ended any further discussion of the tour with your letter of October 31st.

The record shows that you were not interested in ironing out genuine problems. You decided instead to reject participation in the tour for narrow factional considerations which you considered more important than the common interests of Canadian Trotskyists and the success of the Hugo Blanco tour.

The last paragraph of your letter is the only response we have had to our April 7th proposal to set up a joint committee to facilitate relations between us. You reject this proposal, thereby generalizing your error on the Blanco tour. We will take up this matter in another letter.

Comradely,

George Addison,
for the ISA/ISO
Political Committee

COPY

Box 108, Station p,
Toronto, Ont.
Nov. 26, 1974

Political Committee, ISA
Dear comrades:

Your response to our letter explaining our position on the Hugo Blanco tour is probably the most audacious of the many factional communiques you have sent us in recent months. It is now clear that you have chosen to create another international incident. This is the only possible conclusion we can draw from the content of your letter and indeed the character of the tour itself. So we wish to make our position absolutely clear, to both you and to the International.

You begin by stating your "ambitious" aim -- "to have the RMG participate in the planning of the entire tour." But these plans were already complete before your initial invitation. Comrade Blanco would determine the entire political content of the tour. Comrade Blanco would determine the distribution of the financial surplus after expenses. So the RMG's "collaboration" would have basically consisted of "planning" and executing the chores necessary to build the meetings -- plus assuming joint financial responsibilities. This proposal bears very little resemblance to the "exemplary" Mandel tour in Australia, jointly sponsored by the CL and the SWL.

But there is a more basic issue involved. It was this issue that motivated our query about the political content of the tour and the observation of the discipline of the International. In tones of shocked outrage, you accuse us of putting comrade Blanco's "loyalty in question by suggesting that he will not act as a responsible member of the International." You remind us that he is a member of the United Secretariat. You piously conclude by appealing to the "traditions of the Fourth International."

To be sure, if comrade Blanco had in the past functioned in a manner consistent with the Statutes of the Fourth International, as do most "loyal" members, our questions concerning the observation of these Statutes would be purely insolent. But as most well-informed members of the International are aware, this is hardly the case. Comrade Blanco seems to be in the habit of flouting the norms of the Fourth International whenever it strikes his fancy. To point out one recent example, do the comrades think that Blanco's exclusive centre-spread interview with the French Lambertist paper, undertaken without the approval or even the knowledge of the French section and containing a line quite distinct from that adopted by the Tenth World Congress, is consistent with "loyal" and "responsible" behaviour? We do not and we refuse to accept responsibility for public acts of indiscipline of this sort.

In fact, your letter answers our previous question concerning the line comrade Blanco will carry on this tour. You allude to the fact that "as comrade Blanco's views on Latin America are well-known, we can understand that the RMG anticipates that it will disagree with parts of his speech." It is not simply a

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matter of our "views" or comrade Blanco's "views" or anyone else's "views". It is a question of the political positions of the Fourth International. Comrade Blanco's "well-known views" were presented to the Tenth World Congress, in the form of documentation (which he co-authored) and reports on the Latin American question, and these "views" were defeated, in favour of other "views". Your letter makes it clear that comrade Blanco will not present the adopted line of the International, but rather his own minority line.

So it is not a matter of our agreement or disagreement with the content of his speech in and of itself. We have no principled objection to building tours for prominent militants with whom we have disagreements. We have done so in the past. But we will not participate in organizing a public violation of the Statutes of the International and the decisions of the Tenth World Congress. We furthermore intend to formally protest this whole incident to the responsible leadership bodies of the Fourth International.

A final note concerning collaboration between our two organizations. Your provocations have continued unceasing since the Tenth World Congress. Your leaders have continued to espouse positions contrary to those of the International at innumerable public meetings. You openly denounced the FCR during the Krivine meetings. You attacked us in a Labor Challenge editorial for reproducing the United Secretariat declaration on the PST in the Old Mole. So you will pardon us if we tend to regard your periodic statements in favour of "reducing tensions" to be little more than hypocritical manoeuvring. It will be very easy to improve relations between you and us. All you need to do is give some concrete demonstrations that you will cease public acts of indiscipline and loyally act to implement the decisions of the International.

communist greetings,

J. Mackenzie, for the
Political Committee, RMG

copy: United secretariat

COPY

New York
Dec. 27, 1974

Dear Jaber,

There are several points I had been meaning to discuss with you. I'll just indicate them here in this letter, we can discuss them in more detail shortly.

I thought the two articles from Al Munadel on the Kurds were very good. (I.P., May 27, 1974, and Inprecor, August 3, 1974.) However, the article published in Inprecor is preceded by an editorial note written by Inprecor, which, in my opinion, contains a few errors. Most serious is the blanket condemnation of Arab nationalism. The introduction says (I'm using the English edition) that "the national question in the Arab East is extremely complicated. Its revolutionary solution requires not only a relentless battle against imperialism and Zionism, but also a consistent and interwoven struggle against Arab nationalism." Later on, it calls for "an uncompromising battle against the oppression of the Kurdish people and the ideology that seeks to justify that oppression, Arab nationalism."

The error here seems to me to be the failure to make a distinction between the dynamic of Arab nationalism when it is directed against those who are oppressing the Arab people and the dynamic of Arab nationalism when it is directed against those who are oppressed by the Arab regimes. In the former case, Arab nationalism directed against imperialism and Zionism plays a progressive role. In the latter case, Arab nationalism (more precisely, Arab chauvinism) directed against the Kurds plays a reactionary role.

The error of the Inprecor introduction illustrates a very common methodological error in analysis of the national question: dissolution of the concrete into the abstract. It is important that errors such as this be rectified, because they can have important political consequences.

* * *

Another point to discuss is the recent article by Ernest Mandel entitled "An Arab and Iranian Finance Capital Emerges." I do not agree with the central thesis of this article. It is true that the governments of the oil-producing semi-colonies have been able to take advantage of inter-imperialist rivalry and of the present -- and, I think, temporary -- situation of scarcity in regard to energy sources in order to gain more favorable terms of trade. The same is true, to a less dramatic extent, with regard to several other countries exporting scarce raw materials. But the accumulation of financial reserves is not the same as the emergence of a new finance capital, not in the sense that Leninists mean by finance capital.

Finance capital, in the Leninist sense, arises in a situation of advanced industrial development. It is one of the defining features of imperialism. In fact, at one point in his work, Lenin says, "Imperialism, or the domination of

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finance capital, is that highest stage of capitalism in which this separation [of money capital from industrial capital] reaches vast proportions." For Lenin, to talk of the emergence of finance capital was just another way of talking of the emergence of imperialism. "The supremacy of finance capital over all other forms of capital means the predominance of the rentier and the financial oligarchy; it means the crystallization of a small number of financially 'powerful' states from among all the rest." Needless to say, this is not the case with regard to the oil producing countries of the Mideast, which remain semi-colonies.

By the way, there will be a long article on this question by Dick Roberts in an upcoming issue of the International Socialist Review. I am very much interested in your opinion. If my memory is correct, you voiced some hesitations about Ernest's views in this regard, back in February when he first raised them.

* * *

Finally, on the question of the PLO. I think the Mal'amal article on "Arafat at the U.N." is one-sided. It is true that the PLO has shifted to the right since the defeats of 1970-1971. It is also true that if a diplomatic settlement were concluded, signifying acceptance of the legitimacy of the Israeli state, this would contradict the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. But such a settlement has not been concluded, nor, to my knowledge, has the PLO openly and explicitly endorsed such a settlement, however much it has been bending to pressure to do so. There is no assurance at all that the trends in this direction will be consummated. The opposite is more likely, given the following two important factors that must be kept in mind: 1. While Moscow is pressing for it, neither Israel nor U.S. imperialism favors the creation of a small West Bank Palestinian state; 2. The Arab masses have not been decisively defeated; to the contrary, the 1973 war has led to greater expectations and more unwillingness to put up with unwarranted concessions. The likely prospect is not such an imposed settlement, but a new war.

The article on "Arafat at the U.N." speaks about the plans of the Arab regimes for "the creation of a Palestinian state side by side with the Zionist state as the only reasonable road to the peaceful solution" and of their attempts to draw the PLO into this project. It goes on to say that "the leadership of the P.L.O. has agreed to go along with these efforts; it has accepted the project of the Palestinian state, which Arafat did not neglect to mention, even if only in a single sentence at the end of his speech." (emphasis in the original; English translation from Inprecor, Dec. 12, 1974.)

This is inaccurate. Arafat called for replacing Israel with a democratic, secular Palestine, the same demand that the PLO has been raising for years. His speech did not call for a small Palestinian state to coexist side by side with Israel. Yes, there are strong trends in the PLO towards accepting this latter position; there have been some sort of "private understandings" reached in this regard, and according to news

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reports, Arafat is involved. But it was striking to me how similar Arafat's UN speech was to the earlier PLO position. What does this signify, if not the difficulty that any Palestinian leadership would have in openly accepting a modus vivendi with Israel? This example should lead us to be cautious about equating a rightist tendency with its consummation.

The earlier Inprecor article by Jon Rothschild, "The Turn of the PLO" (Nov. 28, 1974) makes a similar error, but in the extreme. The whole article seems to treat a Mideast settlement as virtually assured, and a capitulation by the PLO as consummated. It proceeds to analyse events in this one-sided, static and schematic framework -- another example of the type of methodological error mentioned earlier. This analysis leaves out of account both the intransigence of Israel and imperialism, and the dynamic of the class struggle, which will limit the maneuverability towards the right of both the Arab regimes and of the petty bourgeois nationalist organizations.

But if these latter factors are taken into account, as they must be, then it is clear that there are two sides -- contradictory sides -- to consider about Arafat's appearance at the U.N. 1. On the one hand, it occurred in the context of an attempt by various Arab regimes to draw the PLO into accepting responsibility for the projected Mideast settlement legitimatizing Israel; and it reflected the increasing tendency within the PLO to go along with this. 2. On the other hand, it had the effect of helping to legitimatize the Palestinian struggle for self-determination against Israel.

This second side of the question cannot be ignored. After all, to the ordinary person, Arafat's appearance at the UN was a powerful blow against Israel. That's certainly the way it was viewed in the United States. In fact, Arafat's speech, which was published and broadcast in the mass media here, probably resulted in a more widespread popularization in the U.S. of the demand for a democratic, secular Palestine than all of the PLO's previous propaganda combined. Many people got quite a different view of the Palestinian struggle than they normally get in the American mass media.

According to the news reports, Arafat's UN appearance also had a very big impact among the Palestinian masses, even encouraging mass actions in the West Bank. Will it really be so easy for the PLO to openly retreat from the democratic secular Palestine position and accept a settlement legitimatizing Israel? It may occur, but it is not a foregone conclusion -- especially if we remember also, that even in the unlikely event that such a settlement were to be consummated under the present circumstances, it would not be on the terms currently proposed by the Arab regimes, but would be on far worse terms. It would be a settlement on the terms put forward by Israel and U.S. imperialism. If they ever did accept a Palestinian state, it would be a "state like no other state" -- that is, a state with no real power, nor even with the potential power to threaten Israel.

This whole side of the question was omitted from the article.

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Of course, this is not to deny the rightward evolution of the PLO -- only to give a more balanced assessment of the dynamics of what is happening. We shouldn't treat the PLO differently than we do other petty bourgeois or Stalinist led liberation movements in other places. I can't help getting this impression, though, in reading Inprecor's coverage of Indochina and Southern Africa, and then comparing it to the coverage of Palestine.

The Inprecor article treats the PLO position on a democratic secular Palestine as if it were a factor leading to the rightward evolution of the PLO. In fact, the opposite is the case. The rightward evolution has been reflected in a downplaying of this demand. If there were ever to be a capitulation to the imperialists and Zionists, the precondition would be the dropping of this demand, because it is incompatible with the acceptance of the legitimacy of Israel.

This illustrates once again that what gives the democratic secular Palestine demand its power is that it expresses the goal of the Palestinian people for self-determination. To deny this can lead to rather strange political contortions. For example, Jon Rothschild's article argues in relation to this demand that "the political program and strategic goal of the movement was bourgeois in nature, objectively expressing the class interests of the Palestinian bourgeoisie in exile." This is far-fetched. The strategic goal of the Palestinian "bourgeoisie in exile" was to find some way to coexist with Israel -- not to replace it with a democratic Palestine. Of course, bourgeois forces certainly wished that there would be a bourgeois Palestinian state rather than Israel (a wish also shared with the reactionary clerical and large-landowning strata). But for them this was no more than a desire, certainly not a strategic goal. Only to the toiling masses is it a strategic goal.

Another major error of the Rothschild article is contained in the following passage: "What the PLO's new turn amounts to is not an abandonment of its previous program, but an abandonment of the concept (and practice) of achieving it through armed struggle. The most decisive aspect of this turn is that the thing that gave Fateh its revolutionary content was not its program, but rather the fact that it was waging a struggle against imperialism and Zionism in real life."

Of course, the program of the PLO was never a proletarian program; it was a petty bourgeois program. But the demand for self-determination (democratic secular Palestine) was a revolutionary democratic demand, one that would have been incorporated into the program of a proletarian party, as one of a series of democratic and transitional demands designed to lead to the creation of a workers state through a proletarian-led revolution.

Furthermore, if the program of the PLO was always bourgeois, then how could armed struggle on behalf of this program give Fateh a "revolutionary content"? After all, the regimes in Cairo and Damascus also wage armed struggle on behalf of a bourgeois program -- far more effectively than Fateh. That

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struggle is progressive, of course, but it does not ipso facto change them into revolutionary regimes. Nor did Fateh's method of struggle define it as a revolutionary organization, in the precise Leninist sense of the word.

Of course, Fateh's determination to fight for its objectives in action was a big step forward over those groups that were content to issue documents. At the same time, however, Fateh's overemphasis on small-scale military actions, including terrorist actions, was a weakness. The positive side of Fateh came primarily from its mass base and its strong adherence to a self-determination position (democratic secular Palestine). The rightist tendencies in Fateh were strengthened after the masses were defeated in Jordan and Lebanon in 1970-1971; with these defeats, the self-determination stance was moderated. Jon Rothschild's error here is symptomatic of how the line of "armed struggle" leads to a deemphasis of program in favor of a particular method of struggle.

Well, there is a lot more I could say about this article, but I will wait until we can have a chance to discuss these questions at length.

Comradely regards,

Gus